

❖❖❖❖❖❖ TESTIFYING AT A LEGISLATIVE HEARING ❖❖❖❖❖❖

Your elected state legislators are interested in your views on proposed legislation. Speaking at a public hearing is an effective way to let them know your opinion. This brochure explains how you can participate in the Legislature's public hearing process.

INFORMATION ON PUBLIC HEARINGS

There are 3 ways to find out when and where public hearings are being held:

(1) Notice of public hearings will usually be printed 1 or 2 weekends ahead of the hearing in the following newspapers: the *Bangor Daily News* Weekend Edition; the *Maine Sunday Telegram*; and the *Lewiston Sunday Sun*. The notice will include the Legislative Document (LD) number, the title of the bill and the hearing date, time and location; (2) The Legislature's web page contains the public hearing and work session notices. The address is: <http://janus.state.me.us/legis>; (3) If you can't get the information you need from newspapers or the Internet, you can call the Legislative Information Office at 287-1692 or 1-800-301-3178 (TTY 287-6826). Call this office also if you plan to attend a public hearing or work session and you have any special needs. It is helpful to reference the Legislative Document in "LD" number when you call for information about a bill.

PREPARING TESTIMONY

If you plan to speak at a public hearing, it is often useful to prepare and distribute your comments in written form. This helps you make clear and concise comments, and ensures that committee members who are not present at the public hearing have the opportunity to receive your input. In preparing testimony, written or not, make sure you introduce yourself and, if you represent an organization, give the name of the organization. State whether you support the bill, oppose it or are offering suggestions to improve it, and then explain your reasoning. If you do provide written testimony, **bring at least 20 copies and give them to the committee clerk before you testify.** Photocopiers are available in the Law and Legislative Reference Library in Room 200 of the State House for a nominal charge.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Most committee hearings are held in the State House (the Capitol) or on the second floor of the Cross Office Building. The buildings are connected through an underground connector which can be entered from the ground floor of either building. The committee hearing times and locations are posted on the third floor of the State House and on the second floor of the Cross Office Building.

PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

Speaking order: At the beginning of each hearing, the presiding committee chair will call the public hearing to order and announce the bill to be heard. The legislator who sponsored the bill will introduce the bill, after which, the presiding chair will ask if any other cosponsors wish to testify. Once sponsors and cosponsors have had the opportunity to speak, public testimony is invited. Generally, the public may present testimony in one of three categories in the following order: those favoring the bill, those against the bill, and those neither for nor against the bill but who wish to offer information about the bill. **NOTE:** The committee may be hearing several bills during a public hearing. Generally the bills are heard in the order in which they are advertised. However, the schedule is subject to change and the length of the hearing on most bills is difficult to predict.

Your turn at the podium: When it is your turn to testify, advance to the podium and sign in. Address the committee as follows: "Senator Smith, Representative Jones and members of the committee." Introduce yourself, indicate who you represent and whether you support the bill, oppose it or are offering suggestions to improve it, and then explain your reasoning. If other speakers have already made your point, let the committee know that you agree with the previous remarks of other speakers, but try to avoid repeating the testimony of previous speakers. When you finish, remain at the podium for a moment, in case committee members want to ask you questions.

Comings and Goings: Many hearings last throughout the day, and many legislators are members of more than one committee. Legislators may need to leave and re-enter the room if they are scheduled to be at a public hearing or work session in another committee. However, they will receive any written information, which is a good reason to provide written testimony.

Decorum in Committee Proceedings: Please direct your comments to the committee, not to the audience, and give your courteous attention to other speakers, regardless of their views. Don't applaud or indicate pleasure or displeasure with anyone's remarks. Only members of the committee may ask questions of persons who testify.

Work sessions: After the public hearing, a work session is scheduled at which committee members discuss the bill and decide whether to recommend its passage. The public may speak at a work session only if a committee member requests further public input and the presiding chair grants permission. Work sessions on a bill are generally held on a day other than the day of the public hearing. If you would like to find out when a work session will be held, ask the clerk how to do that.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Bills (LDs) and Amendments: Single copies of bills and printed amendments are available upon request at no charge in the Legislative Document Room (Room 102, State House).

Legislative Internet Web page: Bills, calendars, schedules and other bill related information are available on the Legislature's web page at: <http://janus.state.me.us/legis>

Bill Status Information: Legislative Information Office, Room 121, State House - 287-1692 / TTY# 287-6826

Committee Clerks: Every committee has a committee clerk who provides administrative support to committees and can answer specific questions regarding public hearings, work sessions and meeting times and places. Clerks may be reached in the committee room or office, by phone or e-mail or by calling the Legislative Information Office.

Senate and House Calendars: Calendars of legislative matters to be discussed in the Senate and House are published each day the Legislature is in session and are available at no charge in the Legislative Document Room. They are also available on the legislative web page.

Laws and Rules: Copies are kept in the Law and Legislative Reference Library, Room 200, State House, 287-1600.

Phone Numbers: To leave a message for a member of the House during session call 800-423-2900 and to leave a message for a member of the Senate during session call 800-423-6900. Be prepared to leave a concise message.

Parking: Free parking is available in the parking garage on the corner of State Street and Sewall Street or where spaces are marked "*General Parking*." Unauthorized cars will be towed if parked in handicapped parking spaces or any other restricted parking space. One and two hour visitor parking is available on the west side of the Cross Office Building. The visitor entrance to the State House is on the west side of the building.

Special Services: If you plan to attend a public hearing or work session and have any special needs, please call Legislative Information at 287-1692. They will make every effort to accommodate your request. Handicapped parking is available between the State House and Cross Office Building and on the west side of the Cross Building.